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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ABUJA 002079

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SUBJECT: TRIP REPORT: ADAMAWA GOVERNOR TALKS NATIONAL
POLITICS WITH THE AMBASSADOR

Classified By: Ambassador Robin Renee Sanders for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary: On October 17, the Ambassador (accompanied by StaffAide, notetaker) met with Adamawa Governor Admiral Murtala Nyako during her first trip to Adamawa State in Northeastern Nigeria. The governor spoke candidly about democracy, development, North/South politics, and President Yar'Adua's health and its potential impact on the political environment. While in Adamawa, the Ambassador also gave a speech on democracy and elections at the American University of Nigeria, participated in the ceremonial signing of a \$467,000 USTDA grant for a feasibility study to construct a hydroelectric power plant in the state, and made a courtesy visit to the Lamido of Adamawa (or Emir), the longest reigning monarch in Nigeria and father-in-law of former Vice President Atiku Abubakar. End Summary.

Northern Politics

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12. (SBU) In their 30-minute meeting, Governor Nyako, a retired admiral and chief of naval staff, and owner of a successful agribusiness, spoke candidly with the Ambassador about the political environment in Nigeria. He said he was very optimistic about Nigerian democracy, repeatedly contrasting it with the Babangida and Abacha regimes of the 1980s and 90s, where "only those in the ruling family had a voice." The Ambassador asked why people in Abuja are nervous about democracy in Nigeria, to which the governor responded, "city boys are always nervous". He said the culture of give and take, accepting both political wins and losses, is not in the psyche of the cities/elites, who fail to comprehend the importance of diversity in a democracy. The governor also said Nigerian political parties fail to grasp the meaning of democracy and public service by making unnecessary demands on public officials to contribute sums of money that are well beyond the means of what a public servant should be reasonably expected to afford. He opined that Nigeria was becoming a one-party state where "everyone wants to be in the ruling party," claiming that competition within the party has become so fierce that the factions within the PDP are now acting like separate parties themselves.

13. (C) In response to the Ambassador's questions on President Yar'Adua's health and what that might mean for the future of the country, the Northern governor and long-time public servant said he was optimistic about how the transition would

unfold. He noted that the president's health has been a serious concern for several years, but that when he was governor of Katsina his travel outside the country for medical treatment fell under the radar and few realized the seriousness of his condition. The governor said that if the president's health deteriorates further and he is unable to finish his term, there is a general consensus in the North that they would accept the succession outlined in the Constitution. (Note: others have outlined a different scenario where Vice President Jonathan would not succeed Yar'Adua. End Note). He said the vice president should be allowed to assume the presidency, which would "only be for a couple of years before we (the North) would get it back." He reiterated that the PDP would be able to select a strong vice president from the North to serve with the acting southern president until, he predicts, the North takes back the presidency in 2011.

Agricultural Issues =====

14. (SBU) On a side note, the governor spoke extensively about agricultural development in Adamawa State, the second poorest in Nigeria according to a World Bank report he cited. He thanked the USG for its support of the Farmers Association of Nigeria, which he chairs, and said the USG had been the driving force for agriculture in Nigeria during the last ten years. He requested further assistance to help strengthen agriculture in the state through capacity building programs aimed at improving grain yields and educating farmers on how to use new technologies like hybrid seeds. The governor owns

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one of the largest mechanized farms in Nigeria employing thousands of people in Adamawa State. The Ambassador said she would connect the state's agricultural representatives with the U.S. agricultural attach to explore opportunities for cooperation.

15. (SBU) After the meeting, Governor Nyako and the Ambassador participated in the ceremonial signing of a \$467,000 USTDA grant for a feasibility study to construct a hydroelectric power plant in the state. While in Yola, the Ambassador also delivered a policy speech to a packed auditorium of nearly 1,000 students, professors and community members at the American University of Nigeria (AUN), a partner institution of the American University in Washington, DC. She then paid a courtesy visit to the Lamido of Adamawa (or Emir), Aliyu Mustapha, the longest reigning emir in Nigeria. The Lamido is the father-in-law of former Vice President Atiku Abubakar, but unlike his son-in-law the emir was not interested in discussing politics despite the Ambassador's attempts, on several occasions, to engage with him on various political and development issues and their impact on his people.
Sanders